2:Gough E-4, 5 (1947-1949)1961 A Wll Kerala A Wll
Central Kerala Nayar

individual basis, but this money seems only to have sufficed for their food and other necessities while on the march or on service in towns. When they were at home in their villages their kāranavan assumed responsibility for each man's customary gifts to his wives in other households.

Within his own household the kāranavan personally allocated their subsistence to its members. Every few weeks he transferred quantities of unhusked rice, vegetables, and other stores from the granary to storerooms inside the house. They were then usually taken over by the eldest woman, who kept keys to the storerooms and chests and allocated daily supplies to the kitchen. In property groups with more than one homestead the kāranavan delivered quantities of paddy, salt, and coconut oil twice annually to each house according to the number of its members. Each house sent a person daily to the ancestral house to bring fresh vegetables, milk, buttermilk, and other perishable foods. In all taravāds the kāranavan controlled purchases from the town. Twice a year—at New Year and at the harvest festival—he distributed clothing to both male and female members.

Virtuous kāranavans were those who managed the daily affairs of the taravād with thrift, justice, and meticulous care, but who, through judicious planning, were able to lavish grand feasts upon caste members, tenants, village servants, and serfs at the major life-crisis rites. An aged kāranavan would enumerate with satisfaction the various feasts at funerals, tāli rites, and first-menstruation ceremonies which he had satisfactorily conducted. Each of the servant castes contributed appropriate goods or services in advance of these feasts, and each Nayar house reciprocated the hospitality when its own life-crisis rites came round. Besides reaffirming in a ceremonial manner the different types of ties between Nayars and between Nayars and the lower castes, the life-crisis ceremonies seem to have stimulated production and provided suitable foci for acts of economic redistribution and reciprocity.

The amounts of time spent by junior men of the taravād on different activities are no longer clearly known. We know however that at the age of seven a boy was inducted into military training in the village gymnasium; this training persists in a few villages, and includes fencing, wrestling, rigorous exercise, and very strenuous massage. Traditionally, Nayars also learned archery from a special caste of village servants (Vil Kurups). For a part of their time they attended a village school run by yet another caste of schoolteachers (Eruttacchans); almost all adult Nayar men and most women were literate

6:Fawcett G-5 (ca. 1900)1915
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The month Karkkatakam, when the Malayalis say "the body is cool," is the time when, according to custom, the Nâyar youths practise physical exercises. At Payôli in North Malabar, when I was there in August 1895, the local instructor of athletics was a Paravan, a mason by caste. As he had the adjunct 'Kurup' to his name it took some time to discover the fact. Teachers of his ilk are invariably of the Paravan caste, and when they are believed to be properly accomplished they are given the honorific 'Kurup.' So carefully are things regulated that no other person was permitted to teach athletics within the amshom (a local area, a small county): and his women folk had privileges, they only being the midwives who could attend on the Nâyar women of the amshom. His fee for a course of exercises for the month was ten rupees. He and some of his pupils gave an exhibition of their quality.

Besides bodily contortions and somersaults (practised in a long low-roofed shed having a sandy floor) there is play with the following instruments:—"Waṭṭa" (as in the illustration) "cheruvadi," a short stick, and a stick like a quarter staff called a sarîravadi—"stick the length of one's body." The waṭṭa is held in the right hand as a dagger; it is used to stab or strike and, in some ingenious way turn over an opponent. The total length of the waṭṭa is two feet, and of the cheruvadi about three feet. The latter is squared at the ends and is but a short staff.

It is held in the right hand a few inches from the end, and is used for striking and guarding only. The sarîravadi is held at or near one end by one or by both hands; the distance between the hands is altered constantly, and so is the end of the stick, which is grasped now by one now by another end by either hand as occasion may require; sometimes it is grasped in the middle. The performance with these simple things was astonishing. I should say the waṭṭa and the cheruvadi represented swords, or rather that they were used for initiation or practice in swordmanship when the Nâyars were the

6:Pawcett G-5 (ca. 1900)1915
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ASTROLOGY, MAGIC,* WITCHCRAFT.

Astrology.—The ordinary astrologer of Malabar is a man of the Kanisan or Panikkar† caste, a community relatively low in the social scale, therefore carrying pollution to those of the higher caste. A curious position in society for people of a learned profession to occupy. The Panikkar is also, very often, the school-master. He is in request in connection with every social function, religious or other, and of course, at every birth. His astrology, he will tell you, is divided into three parts:

(1) Ganita, which treats of the constellations;
(2) Samkita, which explains the origin of the constellations, comets, falling stars, earthquakes;
(3) Hôra, by which the fate of man is explained.

The Panikkar, who follows in the foot-steps of his forefathers, should have a thorough knowledge of astrology and of mathematics, and be learned in the Vêdas. He should be sound in mind and body, truthful and patient. He should look well after his family, and he should worship regularly the nine planets:—Sûryan—the Sun; Chandran—Moon; Chovva—Mars; Bûdhan—Mercury; Vyâzham, or Guru, or Brihaspati—Jupiter; Sukran, or Sani—Venus; Râhu and Kêtu. The two last, though not visible, are, oddly enough, classed as planets by the Panikkar. They are said to be two parts of an Âsura who was cut in two by Vishnu.

I here reproduce a diagram made for me by a Panikkar showing the relative positions of the planets on the 7th of April 1895:

Sûryan, Bûdhan.	Sukkran.	Chovva.	Brihaspati.
Râhu.			
			Kêtu.
		Sani.	Chandran.

N.B.—Chandran remains 2½ days in each of the 12 *rasis* or celestial chambers.

* What was said under "Magic and sorcery" when describing Nambûtiri Brahmans, Bulletin, Vol. III, No. I, applies also to the Nâyar.

† This is not to be confounded with the honorific Panikkar affixed to the name of a Nâyar.

595 It is a point very keenly debated as to how far polyandry was prevalent among the Nāyars in olden days. During the last fifty years no trace of such a system has been found. It is to a certain extent true that there is extreme instability of marriage relationship among the commoner folk even now. But for a woman to have more than one husband at a time *seems to have been against the moral ideas of the community even two hundred years ago.*[1] Nāyar ballads and poetry of that age contain many passages where polyandry is spoken of as a barbarous and unknown custom.

[538]

But though strict polyandry does not seem to have existed at any time, traces of a *system of supplementary spouses*, very much like the Pirauru custom among the Australians, exist even now. In the *Enangar* or allied families, which we have noticed before, any woman of the same generation and in the same relationship as cross-cousin is eligible for marriage, and even if she is married, the young man whose spouse she might have been has certain rights—not distinctly conjugal, but still pertaining to it. He is the one who avenges her against insults. Her children call him "little father," and he has the right of entering any part of her apartments. Among the commoner folk a system of conjugal relationship may still exist. It is practically certain that this is a survival of the system of *supplementary spouses* such as we have in Australia and other places.

[613] [621] [582]

562 In this connection it may be interesting to notice the general position of women in Nāyar society. On *a priori* grounds we are inclined to assume that the position of women in matrilineal communities is higher than in patrilineal societies of the same standard of culture. How strongly this opinion is held will be seen from the fact that even in other parts of South India Malabar is spoken of as the "Land where women rule." It is impossible to make a general statement as to the relative status of women in matrilineal and patrilineal communities. But as far as the Nāyars are concerned, their women enjoy equality with men. They can hold property in their own right and enter the professions they choose. Traditions of scholarship and art are, perhaps, stronger among them than among men. Some of the best Malayalam poets and scholars have been Nāyar women, and at the present day the statistics of female education show a higher percentage of English-educated girls among them than among any other Indian community. All the girls' schools in Travancore are manned by them, and some of them hold such high administrative posts as inspectorships of girls' schools.

[871] [875]

595 562 Polygamy was indeed prevalent, and is still legally permitted among the Nāyars. But this, in my opinion, does not show an inferiority of status. Though the opinion of Nāyar women would strongly be against the wife of the Akikuyu chieftain who told Mrs. Routledge that she would like her husband to have as many wives as possible,[2] there is no reason to believe that the possession of more than one wife

[1] See Note 3 at the end. Appendix on "McLennan and the Nair Type of Polyandry."

[2] Among a Prehistoric People (Akikuyu).

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fact contained all the rudiments of the State. There was the head-man with his assistants whose duties have been already mentioned. There were also the hereditary village servants (*cheria jenmakkárs*), the village Panchayets or *kúttams*, and the *Kavalai* system of police, and the village watchmen (*kávalkkárs*) with their grain fees, and sacred institutions, with their usual privileges. And finally there were independent Nayar chieftains with their private properties and usual sources of income and taxation.

The village life is simple, delightful, and charming, but it is gradually passing away under the influence of western civilization. It is therefore of some ethnographical interest to preserve an account of it at its period of transition.

The village education may first be taken for treatment. The old village school or pial school masters were called *Ezhuttachans* or *Asáns*, some of whom were maintained by the leading families on small monthly allowances and meals, while others owned schools and lived upon the income derived from the pupils thereof. The education of youths commenced at a very early period, for which an auspicious day, nay, an auspicious hour, generally the *Vijaya Desami* or *Vidyárambham* (beginning of the alphabet) day, the last day of *Desara* in the month of *Kanni* or *Thulám* (September-November) was chosen, when the local *Asán* or any fairly educated man was invited to give the boy his first lesson. In a conspicuous part of the building a bell-metal vessel was placed. On this was spread a thin layer of rice, and on each side of the vessel was placed a bag of rice and paddy, while a lighted lamp was also placed beside it. In front of these sat the infant scholar three or five years of age. The *Asán* or the teacher wrote on the boy's tongue with a gold coin (fanam) the divine invocation *Hari Sree Gana Pata Ye Namah* (Salutation be to Vishnu, Saraswati and Ganapati). The initiation was completed by the teacher holding the boy's ring finger and tracing the letters of the alphabet in the rice in the vessel. The ceremony would then come to an end with a feast to the inmates of the house as well as to friends and relations. After this, he was placed under a teacher who taught him along with others to write the letters of the alphabet on sand. This would go on for a month or two until the

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872 youngster got a mastery of the letters. Then he was taught to read and write short sentences on cadjan leaves (*Ola Ezhutal*). He was made to commit to memory short verses, and lessons in arithmetic were added to his curriculum. Thus the youngster acquired a fair knowledge of reading, writing, and arithmetic, in about two years, and was thereafter recommended to an advanced course of studies, which consisted of a study of Sanskrit, the perusal of the *Purânas*, and also arithmetic sufficient to enable him to calculate the position of planets and help him in the casting of horoscopes. Girls also were taught reading, writing, arithmetic, and singing, and were encouraged in the reading of the *Purânas*. Such in brief was the course of instruction imparted in these small institutions.

872 876 346 354 The schools were flimsy sheds with little or no furniture, while the boys sat on small mats or on the floor, which was covered with sand for purposes of writing. The teacher had a raised seat from which he supervised and listened to the loud recitations of the lessons set on the previous evenings. The boys went to him, one by one, repeated their lesson, and received another written by him on the palm leaf, which was to be learnt during the day. The school hours were generally from seven to ten in the morning and again from two to five in the afternoon. During the latter hours, the budding scholars were instructed in the reading of the Ramayana and other *Puranas*; and before the end of the lessons for the day, the boys were made to repeat with one voice, some mathematical formula. At home, the boys revised their work and recited the names of Gods and short verses as prayers to them. They had no work for about 12 days in the month, besides the usual Hindu holidays. 875 Twice during the month, when the fortnightly holidays commenced, *i. e.*, on *Dwddesi* (the 12th day after the full or new moon), the teacher was remunerated by each boy with the payment of an anna or two, and even this was sometimes evaded by the opportune absenting of some pupils. He also received presents of cloth with a rupee or two from some of the richer families to which a few of his pupils belonged. Boys were subjected to a rigorous course of discipline; caning was freely resorted to as a mode of correction, and the teacher was often regarded with terror rather than with respect and admiration. Their only books were manuscripts on cadjan leaves; their

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556 553 644 [875] It was the Panikkars who kept kalaris, or gymnastic and military schools, but in modern times many Panikkars have taken to the teaching of letters. Some are entirely devoted to temple service, and are consequently regarded as belonging to a division of Mārans, rather than of Nāyars. The title Kaimal is derived from kai, hand, signifying power. In former times, some Kaimals were recognised chieftains, *e.g.*, the Kaimal of Vaikkattillam in North Travancore. Others were in charge of the royal treasury, which, according to custom, could not be seen even by the kings except in their presence. "Neither could they," Barbosa writes, "take anything out of the treasury without a great necessity, and by the counsel of this person and certain others." The titles Unnithan and Valiyathan were owned by certain families in Central Travancore, which were wealthy and powerful. [692] They were to some extent self-constituted justices of the peace, and settled all ordinary disputes arising in the kara where they dwelt. The title Menavan, or Menon, means a superior person, and is derived from mel, above, and avan he. The recipient of the title held it for his life-time, or it was bestowed in perpetuity on his family, according to the amount of money paid down as atiyara. As soon as an individual was made a Menon, he was presented with an ola (palmyra leaf for writing on) and an iron style as symbols of the office of accountant, which he was expected to fill. [451] In British Malabar even now every amsam or revenue village has an accountant or writer called Menon. The title Menokki, meaning one who looks over or superintends, is found only in British Malabar, as it was exclusively a creation of the Zamorin. [They are, I gather, accountants in temples.]

5.4 "There are numerous sub-divisions comprised under the general head Nāyar, of which the most important,

553
613 near the house, round which he makes three pradakshinams, pouring water from a kindi round the foot of the tree as he does so. The procession then returns to the house, and on the way an old woman of the family proclaims the baby's name aloud for the first time in the form of a question, asking it 'Krishnan' (for instance), 'dost thou see the sky?' In some cases, the father simply calls out the name twice.

852 "The Vidyarambham ceremony to celebrate the
871 beginning of the child's education takes place in the fifth
[778] or seventh year. In some places, the child is first taken to the temple, where some water sanctified by mantrams is poured over his head by the Shāntikāran (officiating priest). The ceremony at the house is opened by Ganapathi pūja performed by an Ezhuttacchan, or by a
[782] Nambūdri, or another Nāyar. The Ezhuttacchan writes on the child's tongue with a gold fanam (coin) the invocation to Ganapathi (Hari Sri Ganapathayi nama), or sometimes the fifty-one letters of the Malayalam alphabet, and then grasps the middle finger of the child's right hand, and with it traces the same letters in parched rice. He also gives the child an ola (strip of palm leaf) inscribed with them, and receives in return a small fee
[875] in cash. Next the child thrice touches first the
[576] Ezhuttacchan's feet, and then his own forehead with his right hand, in token of that reverent submission to the teacher, which seems to have been the key-note of the old Hindu system of education.

304 "The Kāthukuttu or ear-boring is performed either at the same time as the Pāla-kudi or the Choulam, or at any time in the fifth or seventh year. The operator, who may be any one possessing the necessary skill, pierces first the right and then the left ear with two gold or silver wires brought by the goldsmith, or with karamullu

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they might become a prey to these ravenous demons. In short, the Bharani day inaugurates a reign of terror in the locality, lasting for these seven days. Afterwards, all the dirt is removed. The temple is cleansed and sanctified, and again left open to public worship. The pilgrims return, but not in the same manner in which they repaired thither. During the backward journey, no obscene songs or expressions are indulged in. They are to come back quietly and calmly, without any kind of demonstrations. They get back to their respective homes, and distribute the sandals and other pujah substances to their relations and friends who have elected to remain at home; and the year's pilgrimage is brought to a close."

"The month Karkkatakam," Mr. Fawcett writes, "when the Malayâlis say the body is cool, is the time when, according to custom, the Nâyar youths practice physical exercises. At Payôli in North Malabar, when I was there in 1895, the local instructor of athletics was a Paravan, a mason by caste. As he had the adjunct Kurup to his name, it took some time to discover the fact. Teachers of his ilk are invariably of the Paravan caste, and, when they are believed to be properly accomplished, they are given the honorific Kurup. So carefully are things regulated that no other person was permitted to teach athletics within the amsham (a local area, a small county), and his womenfolk had privileges, they only being the midwives who could attend on the Nâyar women of the amsham. His fee for a course of exercises for the month was ten rupees. He, and some of his pupils, gave an exhibition of their quality. Besides bodily contortions and somersaults, practiced in a long low-roofed shed having a sandy floor, there is play with the following instruments :—watta ; cheruvadi,

463 and Kshatriya houses and temples, and deal in dairy [357] produce, as well as being engaged in copper-sheet roofing, tile-making, pottery, palanquin-bearing, and so [178] on. But these traditional occupations are fast ceasing 872 under the ferment of a new civilisation. In the matter of education, the Nāyars occupy a prominent position. Almost every Nāyar girl is sent to the village school to learn the three R's, quite as much as a matter of [212] course as the schooling of boys. This constitutes a feature of Malabar life that makes it the most literate country in all India, especially in respect of the female 875 sex. After Rāmanujam Ezhuttachchan developed and enriched the Malayālam language, numerous Asans or village teachers came into existence in different parts of 873 Malabar. After a preliminary study of Malayālam, such as desired higher, *i.e.*, Sanskrit education, got discipled to an Ambalavāsi or a Sastri. Even to-day the estimable desire to study Sanskrit is seen in some Nāyar youths, who have readily availed themselves of the benefit of the local Sanskrit college. In respect of English education, the Nāyars occupy a prominent [658] position. The facility afforded by the Government of Travancore for the study of English is being largely availed of by Nāyars, and it is a matter deserving to be prominently recorded that, in recent years, several Nāyar girls have passed the Matriculation examination of the University of Madras."

212 181 It is noted, in the Gazetteer of Malabar, that "the Nāyars as a class are the best educated and the most advanced of the communities in Malabar (excepting perhaps the Pattar Brāhmans, who are not strictly a Malayālam class), and are intellectually the equals of [464] the Brāhmans of the East Coast. Many of them have risen to the highest posts in Government, and the caste